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Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States

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## MAROONS WITHIN THE PRESENT LIMITS OF THE UNITED STATES

An ever-present feature of ante-bellum southern life was the existence of camps of runaway Negro slaves, often called maroons, when they all but established themselves independently on the frontier. These were seriously annoying, for they were sources of insubordination. They offered havens for fugitives, served as bases for marauding expeditions against nearby plantations and, at times, supplied the nucleus of leadership for planned uprisings. Some contemporary writers and a few later historians have noticed,<sup>1</sup> in a general and meager way, the existence of this feature of American slavery. It merits, however, detailed treatment.

It appears that notice of these maroon communities was taken only when they were accidentally uncovered or when their activities became so obnoxious or dangerous to the slavocracy that their destruction was felt to be necessary. Evidence of the existence of at least fifty such communities in various places and at various times, from 1672 to 1864, has been found. The mountainous, forested, or swampy regions of South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama (in order of importance) appear to have been the favorite haunts for these black Robin Hoods. At times a settled life, rather than a pugnacious

<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Janson, *The Stranger in America*, London, 1807, pp. 328-30; William H. Russell, *My Diary North and South*, Boston, 1863, pp. 88-89; Frederick L. Olmsted, *Journey in Seaboard Slave States*, London, 1904, II, pp. 177-78; Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, London, 1860, pp. 30, 55; T. W. Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, Boston, 1870, p. 248; James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, Boston, 1860, II, pp. 397-98; W. H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad*, N. Y., 1899, p. 25; S. M. Ellis, *The Solitary Horseman*, Kensington, 1927, p. 169; V. A. Moody in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (1924) VII, pp. 224-25; R. H. Taylor in *North Carolina Historical Review* (1928), V, pp. 23-24; U. B. Phillips in *The South in the Building of the Nation*, Richmond, 1909, IV, p. 229.

and migratory one, was aimed at, as is evidenced by the fact that these maroons built homes, maintained families, raised cattle, and pursued agriculture, but this all but settled life appears to have been exceptional.

The most noted of such communities was that located in the Dismal Swamp between Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> It seems likely that about two thousand Negroes, fugitives, or the descendants of fugitives, lived in this area. They carried on a regular, if illegal, trade with white people living on the borders of the swamp. Such settlements may have been more numerous than available evidence would indicate, for their occupants aroused less excitement and less resentment than the guerrilla outlaws.

The activities of maroons in Virginia in 1672 approached a point of rebellion so that a law was passed<sup>3</sup> urging and rewarding the hunting down and killing of these outlaws. An item<sup>4</sup> of November 9, 1691, notices the depredations caused by a slave, Mingoe, from Middlesex county, Virginia, and his unspecified number of followers in Rappahannock county. These Negroes not only took cattle and hogs, but, what was more important, they had recently stolen "two guns, a Carbyne & other things."

In June, 1711, the inhabitants of the colony of South Carolina were kept<sup>5</sup> "in great fear and terror" by the activities of "several Negroes [who] keep out, armed, and robbing and plundering houses and plantations."

<sup>2</sup> See references in note 1, and an article by Edmund Jackson in *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, January 1, 1852; Harriet B. Stowe, *Dred*, 2 vols., Boston, 1856; Margaret Davis in *South Atlantic Quarterly* (1934), XXXIII, pp. 171-184.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hening, *Statutes at Large of Virginia*, II, p. 299; P. A. Bruce, *Economic History of Virginia in 17th Century*, N. Y., 1896, II, p. 115.

<sup>4</sup> *Order Book*, Middlesex County, 1680-1694, pp. 526-27 (Virginia State Library); Bruce, *op. cit.*, II, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> E. C. Holland, *A Refutation of the Calumnies*, Charleston, 1823, p. 63; D. D. Wallace, *The History of South Carolina*, N. Y., 1934, I, p. 372.

These men were led by a slave named Sebastian, who was finally tracked down and killed by an Indian hunter. Lieutenant Governor Gooch of Virginia wrote<sup>6</sup> to the Lords of Trade, June 29, 1729, "of some runaway Negroes beginning a settlement in the Mountains & of their being reclaimed by their Master." He assured the Lords that the militia was being trained to "prevent this for the future."

In September, 1733, the Governor of South Carolina offered a reward of £20 alive and £10 dead for "Several Run away Negroes who are near the Congerees, & have robbed several of the Inhabitants thereabouts." The Notchee Indians offered, April, 1744, to aid the government of South Carolina in maintaining the subordination of its slave population. Three months later, July 5, 1774, Governor James Glen applied "for the assistance of some Notchee Indians in order to apprehend some runaway Negroes, who had sheltered themselves in the Woods, and being armed, had committed disorders. . ."

The number of runaways in South Carolina in 1765 was exceedingly large. This led to fears of a general rebellion.<sup>8</sup> At least one considerable camp of maroons was destroyed that year by military force. A letter from Charleston of August 16, 1768, told<sup>9</sup> of a battle with a body of maroons, "a numerous collection of outcast mulattoes, mustees, and free negroes."

Governor James Habersham of Georgia learned<sup>10</sup> in December, 1771, "that a great number of fugitive Negroes had Committed many Robberies and insults between this

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Manuscripts from British Record Office. Sainsbury, IX, p. 462, Virginia State Library.

<sup>7</sup> *Council Journal* (MS.) V, pp. 487, 494; XI, pp. 187, 383, South Carolina Historical Commission, Columbia, S. C.

<sup>8</sup> D. D. Wallace, *op. cit.*, I, p. 373.

<sup>9</sup> *The Boston Chronicle*, October 3-10, 1768.

<sup>10</sup> *The Colonial Records of Georgia*, ed., A. D. Candler, Atlanta, 1907, XII, pp. 146-47, 325-26.

town [Savannah] and Ebenezer and that their Numbers (which) were now Considerable might be expected to increase daily." Indian hunters and militiamen were employed to blot out this menace. Yet the same danger was present in Georgia in the summer of 1772. Depredations, piracy and arson, were frequent, and again the militia saw service. A letter<sup>11</sup> from Edmund Randolph to James Madison of August 30, 1782, discloses somewhat similar trouble in Virginia. At this time it appears that "a notorious robber," a white man, had gathered together a group of about fifty men, Negro and white, and was terrorizing the community.

The British had combatted the revolutionists' siege of Savannah with the aid of a numerous body of Negro slaves who served under the inspiration of a promised freedom. The defeat of the British crushed the hopes of these Negroes. They fled, with their arms, called themselves soldiers of the King of England, and carried on a guerrilla warfare for years along the Savannah river. Militia from Georgia and South Carolina, together with Indian allies, successfully attacked the Negro settlement in May, 1786, with resulting heavy casualties.<sup>12</sup> Governor Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina referred<sup>13</sup> in his legislative message of 1787 to the serious depredations of a group of armed fugitive slaves in the southern part of the state.

Chesterfield and Charles City counties, Virginia, were troubled<sup>14</sup> by maroons in November, 1792. At least one

<sup>11</sup> M. D. Conway, *Omitted Chapters in History Disclosed in the Life and Papers of Edmund Randolph*, N. Y., 1888, pp. 50-51.

<sup>12</sup> W. B. Stevens, *A History of Georgia*, Philadelphia, 1859, II, pp. 376-78; C. G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History*, Washington, 1928, p. 123; *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on American Manuscripts*, London, 1904, II, p. 544.

<sup>13</sup> C. C. Pinckney, *Life of General Thomas Pinckney*, Boston, 1895, p. 95; D. D. Wallace, *op. cit.*, II, p. 415.

<sup>14</sup> Letter dated Richmond, November 19 in *Boston Gazette*, December 17, 1792.

white man was killed while tracking them down. Ten of the runaways were finally captured, with the aid of dogs. The neighborhood of Wilmington, North Carolina, was harassed<sup>15</sup> in June and July, 1795, by "a number of runaway Negroes, who in the daytime secrete themselves in the swamps and woods . . . at night committed various depredations on the neighbouring plantations." They killed at least one white man, an overseer, and severely wounded another. About five of these maroons, including the leader, known as the General of the Swamps, were killed by hunting parties. It was hoped that "these well-timed severities" would "totally break up this nest of miscreants—At all events, this town has nothing to apprehend as the citizens keep a strong and vigilant night guard." Within two weeks of this first report, of July 3, the capture and execution of four more runaways was reported. On July 17 it was believed that only one leader and a "few deluded followers" were still at large.

The existence of a maroon camp in the neighborhood of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, in May, 1802, is indicated by the fact that the plots and insubordination uncovered among the servile population at that time were attributed<sup>16</sup> to the agitation of an outlawed Negro, Tom Copper, who "has got a camp in one of the swamps." In March, 1811, a runaway community in a swamp in Cabarrus county, North Carolina, was wiped out. These maroons<sup>17</sup> "had bid defiance to any force whatever, and were resolved to stand their ground." In the attack two Negro women were captured, two Negro men killed and another wounded.

<sup>15</sup> *Wilmington Chronicle* (photostat, Library of Congress), July 3, 10, 17, 1795; *Charleston City Gazette*, July 18, 23, 1795; R. H. Taylor in *North Carolina Historical Review* (1928), V, pp. 23-24.

<sup>16</sup> *Raleigh Register* (State Library, Raleigh), June 1, 1802; *N. Y. Herald*, June 2, 1802.

<sup>17</sup> *Edenton Gazette*, March 22, 1811; G. G. Johnson, *Ante-bellum North Carolina*, Chapel Hill, 1937, p. 514.

The close proximity of the weakly governed Spanish territory of East Florida persistently disturbed the equanimity of American slaveholders. Many of the settlers in that region, moreover, were Americans, and they, aided by volunteers from the United States, raised the standard of revolt in 1810, the aim being American annexation.<sup>18</sup> In the correspondence of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Smith and Major Flournoy, both of the United States Army and both actively on the side of the rebels or "patriots" in the Florida fighting, and of Governor Mitchell of Georgia, there are frequent references to the fleeing of American slaves into Florida, where they helped the Indians in their struggle against the Americans and the "patriots." A few examples may be cited.

Smith told Gen. Pinckney, July 30, 1812, of fresh Indian depredations in Georgia and of the escape of about eighty slaves. He planned to send troops against them, for "The safety of our frontier I conceive requires this course. They have, I am informed, several hundred fugitive slaves from the Carolinas and Georgia at present in their Towns & unless they are checked soon they will be so strengthened by desertions from Georgia & Florida that it will be found troublesome to reduce them." And it was troublesome. In a letter to Governor Mitchell of August 21, 1812, Smith declared, "The blacks assisted by the Indians have become very daring." In September further slave escapes were reported from Georgia. On September 11, a baggage train under Captain Williams and twenty men, going to the support of Colonel Smith, was attacked and routed, Williams himself being killed by Indians and maroons. In January, 1813, further escapes were reported, and in February, Smith wrote of battles with Negroes and Indians and the destruction of a Negro fort. One Georgian participant in this fighting,

<sup>18</sup> J. W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, N. Y., 1925, pp. 92, 116, 192-95, 212.

Colonel Daniel Newnan, declared the maroon allies of the Indians were "their best soldiers."<sup>19</sup>

The refusal of the Senate of the United States, at the moment, to sanction occupation of East Florida, finally led to a lull in the fighting. By 1816, however, the annoyance and danger from runaway slaves again served as justification for American intervention. With southern complaints<sup>20</sup> ringing in its ears the administration dispatched, in July, United States troops with Indian allies under Col. Duncan Clinch against the main stronghold of the maroons, the well-stocked Negro fort on Appalachicola Bay. After a siege of ten days a lucky cannon shot totally destroyed the fort and annihilated two hundred and seventy men, women and children. But forty souls survived.<sup>21</sup>

Another major expedition against a maroon community was carried out in 1816. This occurred near Ashepoo, South Carolina. Governor David R. Williams's remarks concerning this in his message of December, 1816, merit quotation:<sup>22</sup>

A few runaway negroes, concealing themselves in the swamps and marshes contiguous to Combahee and Ashepoo rivers, not having been interrupted in their petty plunderings for a long time, formed the nucleus, round which all the ill-disposed and audacious near them gathered, until at length their robberies became too serious to be suffered with impunity. Attempts were then made to disperse them, which either from insufficiency of numbers or bad arrangement, served by their failure only to encourage a wanton destruction of property. Their forces now became alarming, not less from its numbers than from its arms and ammunition with which it was supplied.

<sup>19</sup> T. F. Davis in *Florida Historical Quarterly* (1930), IX, pp. 106-07, 111, 138; *Niles' Weekly Register*, December 12, 1812, III, pp. 235-37.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, *Richmond Enquirer*, July 10, 1816.

<sup>21</sup> *Connecticut Courant*, September 10, 24, 1816; *State Papers*, 2d sess., 15 cong., vol. IV; J. B. McMaster, *History*, IV, p. 431; McMaster's account is practically copied by H. B. Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida*, Cleveland, 1906, p. 228.

<sup>22</sup> H. T. Cook, *Life and Legacy of David R. Williams*, N. Y., 1916, p. 130.

The peculiar situation of the whole of that portion of our coast, rendered access to them difficult, while the numerous creeks and water courses through the marshes around the islands, furnished them easy opportunities to plunder, not only the planters in open day, but the inland coasting trade also without leaving a trace of their movements by which they could be pursued. . . I therefore ordered Major-General Youngblood to take the necessary measures for suppressing them, and authorized him to incur the necessary expenses of such an expedition. This was immediately executed. By a judicious employment of the militia under his command, he either captured or destroyed the whole body.

The Norfolk *Herald* of June 29, 1818, referred<sup>23</sup> to the serious damages occasioned by a group of some thirty runaway slaves, acting together with white men, in Princess Anne county, Virginia. It reported, too, the recent capture of a leader and "an old woman" member of the outlaws. In November of that year maroon activities in Wake county, North Carolina, became serious enough to evoke notice from the local press<sup>24</sup> which advised "the patrol to keep a strict look out." Later an attack upon a store "by a maroon banditti of negroes" led by "the noted Andey, alias Billy James, better known here by the name of Abaellino," was repulsed by armed citizens. The paper believed that the death of at least one white man, if not more, might accurately be placed at their hands. The Raleigh *Register* of December 18, 1818, printed Governor Branch's proclamation offering \$250 reward for the capture of seven specified outlaws and \$100 for Billy James alone. There is evidence<sup>25</sup> that, in this same year, maroons were active in Johnston county, in that state, and one expedition against them resulted in the killing of at least one Negro.

Expeditions against maroons took place<sup>26</sup> in Williams-

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in N. Y. *Evening Post*, July 7, 1818.

<sup>24</sup> Raleigh *Register*, November 13, 27, 1818.

<sup>25</sup> G. G. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 514.

<sup>26</sup> U. B. Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier Documents*, Cleveland, 1909, II, p. 91.

burg county, South Carolina, in the summer of 1819. Three slaves were killed, several captured and one white was wounded. Similar activities occurred in May, 1820, in Gates county, North Carolina. A slave outlaw, Harry, whose head had been assessed at \$200, was killed by four armed whites. "It is expected that the balance of Harry's company [which had killed at least one white man] will very soon be taken."<sup>27</sup>

Twelve months later there was similar difficulty near Georgetown, South Carolina, resulting<sup>28</sup> in the death of one slaveholder and the capture of three outlaws. The activities of considerable maroon groups in Onslow, Carteret, and Bladen counties, North Carolina, aided by some free Negroes, assumed the proportions of rebellion in the summer of 1821. There were plans for joint action between these outlaws and the field slaves against the slaveholders. Approximately three hundred members of the militia of the three counties saw service for about twenty-five days in August and September. About twelve of these men were wounded when two companies of militia accidentally fired upon each other. The situation was under control by the middle of September, "although the said militia (sic) did not succeed in apprehending all the runaways & fugitives, they did good by arresting some, and driving others off, and suppressing the spirit of insurrection."<sup>29</sup> A newspaper item of 1824 discloses<sup>30</sup> that the "prime mover" of the trouble mentioned above, Isam, "alias General Jackson," was among those who escaped at the time, for he is there reported as dying from lashes publicly inflicted at Cape Fear, North Carolina.

<sup>27</sup> *Edenton Gazette*, May 12, 1820, quoted by N. Y. *Evening Post*, May 17, 1820.

<sup>28</sup> N. Y. *Evening Post*, June 11, 1821.

<sup>29</sup> See petition of John H. Hill, Colonel Commandant of the Carteret Militia, dated December, 1825, and accompanying memoranda in *Legislative Papers, 1824-1825* (No. 366), North Carolina Historical Commission, Raleigh; R. H. Taylor, *op. cit.*, V, p. 24; G. G. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 514.

<sup>30</sup> N. Y. *Evening Post*, May 11, 1824.

In the summer of 1822 activity among armed runaway slaves was reported<sup>31</sup> from Jacksonborough (now Jacksonboro) South Carolina. Three were executed on July 19. In August Governor Bennett offered a reward of two hundred dollars for the capture of about twenty maroons in the same region. It is possible that these Negroes had been enlisted in the far-flung conspiracy of Denmark Vesey, uncovered and crushed in June, 1822.

The *Norfolk Herald* of May 12, 1823, contains<sup>32</sup> an unusually full account of maroons under the heading "A Serious Subject." It declares that the citizens of the southern part of Norfolk county, Virginia,

have for some time been kept in a state of mind peculiarly harassing and painful, from the too apparent fact that their lives are at the mercy of a band of lurking assassins, against whose fell designs neither the power of the law, or vigilance, or personal strength and intrepidity, can avail. These desperadoes are runaway negroes, (commonly called outlyers). . . . Their first object is to obtain a gun and ammunition, as well to procure game for subsistence as to defend themselves from attack, or accomplish objects of vengeance.

Several men had already been killed by these former slaves, one, a Mr. William Walker, very recently. This aroused great fear, "No individual after this can consider his life safe from the murdering aim of these monsters in human shape. Every one who has haply rendered himself obnoxious to their vengeance, must, indeed, calculate on sooner or later falling a victim" to them. Indeed, one slaveholder had received a note from these amazing fellows suggesting it would be healthier for him to remain indoors at night—and he did.

A large body of militia was ordered out to exterminate these outcasts and "thus relieve the neighbouring inhabitants from a state of perpetual anxiety and apprehension, than which nothing can be more painful." Dur-

<sup>31</sup> Washington *National Intelligencer*, July 23, August 24, 1822.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in N. Y. *Evening Post*, May 15, 1823.

ing the next few weeks there were occasional reports<sup>33</sup> of the killing or capturing of outlaws, culminating June 25 in the capture of the leader himself, Bob Ferebee, who, it was declared, had been an outlaw for six years. He was executed July 25. In October of this year runaway Negroes near Pineville, South Carolina, were attacked.<sup>34</sup> Several were captured, and at least two, a woman and a child, were killed. One of the maroons was decapitated, and his head stuck on a pole and publicly exposed as "a warning to vicious slaves."

A maroon community consisting of men, women, and children was broken up by a three-day attack made by armed slaveholders of Mobile county, Alabama, in June, 1827. The Negroes had been outlaws for years and lived entirely by plundering neighboring plantations.<sup>35</sup> At the time of the attacks the Negroes were constructing a stockade fort. Had this been finished it was believed that field slaves thus informed would have joined them. Cannon would then have been necessary for their destruction. The maroons made a desperate resistance, "fighting like Spartans." Three were killed, others wounded, and several escaped. Because of the poor arms of the Negroes but one white was slightly wounded.

In November, 1827, a Negro woman returned to her master in New Orleans after an absence of sixteen years. She told<sup>36</sup> of a maroon settlement some eight miles north of the city containing about sixty people. A drought prevailed at the moment so it was felt that "the uncommon dryness . . . has made those retreats attainable . . .

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, May 29, June 5, June 30, 1823.

<sup>34</sup> Charleston *City Gazette* quoted in N. Y. *Evening Post*, October 24, 1823; *Niles' Weekly Register*, October 18, 1823, XXV, p. 112; T. J. Kirkland and R. M. Kennedy, *Historic Camden*, Columbia, 1926, part two, p. 190.

<sup>35</sup> *Mobile Register*, June 20, 21, 1827, quoted in N. Y. *Evening Post*, July 11, 12, 1827; U. B. Phillips in *The South in the Building of the Nation*, Richmond, 1909, IV, p. 229.

<sup>36</sup> N. Y. *Evening Post*, December 4, 1827.

and we are told there is another camp about the head of the bayou Bienvenu. Policy imperiously calls for a thorough search, and the destruction of all such repairs, wherever found to exist."

In the summer of 1829 "a large gang of runaway negroes, who have infested the Parishes of Christ Church and St. James, [S. C.] for several months, and committed serious depredations on the properties of the planters" was accidentally discovered<sup>37</sup> by a party of deer hunters. One of the Negroes was wounded and four others were captured. Several others escaped, but the *Charleston Mercury* hoped the citizens would "not cease their exertions until the evil shall be effectually removed."

Maroons were important factors in causing slave insubordination in Sampson, Bladen, Onslow, Jones, New Hanover, and Dublin counties, North Carolina, from September through December, 1830. Citizens complained<sup>38</sup> that their "slaves are become almost uncontrollable. They go and come and when and where they please, and if an attempt is made to correct them they immediately fly to the woods and there continue for months and years Committing grievous depredations on our Cattle, hogs and Sheep." One of these fugitive slaves, Moses, who had been out for two years, was captured in November. From him one elicited<sup>39</sup> the information that an uprising was imminent, that the conspirators "had arms & ammunition secreted, that they had runners or messengers to go between Wilmington, Newbern & Elizabeth City to 'carry word' & report to them, that there was a camp in Dover Swamp of 30 or 40—another about Gastons Island, on Price's Creek, several on Newport River, several near

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, August 10, 1829.

<sup>38</sup> G. G. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 515, 517; R. H. Taylor, *op. cit.*, V, p. 31.

<sup>39</sup> See letter dated November 15, 1830, Newbern, from J. Turgwyn to Governor John Owen in Governor's *Letter Book*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 247-49, and letter from J. I. Pasteur to Governor Owen also dated Newbern, Nov. 15, 1830, in Governor's Papers No. 60, Historical Commission, Raleigh.

Wilmington.” Arms were found in the place named by Moses

in possession of a white woman living in a very retired situation—also some meat, hid away & could not be accounted for—a child whom the party [of citizens] found a little way from the house, said that his mammy dressed victuals every day for 4 or 5 runaways, & shewed the spot . . . where the meat was then hid & where it was found—the place or camp in Dover was found, a party of neighbours discovered the camp, burnt 11 houses, and made such discoveries, as convinced them it was a place of rendezvous for numbers (it is supposed they killed several of the negroes).

Newspaper accounts referred to the wholesale shooting of fugitives. In 1830 the Roanoke *Advertiser* stated:<sup>40</sup> “The inhabitants of Newbern being advised of the assemblage of sixty armed slaves in a swamp in their vicinity, the military were called out, and surrounding the swamp, killed the whole party.” A later item dated Wilmington, January 7, 1831, declared,<sup>41</sup> “There has been much shooting of negroes in this neighborhood recently, in consequence of symptoms of liberty having been discovered among them.” It is of interest to note that Richmond papers, on receiving the first reports of Nat Turner’s revolt of August, 1831, asked<sup>42</sup> concerning the rebels, “Were they connected with the desperadoes who harassed (sic) N. Carolina last year?”

In June, 1836, there is mention<sup>43</sup> that “a band of runaway negroes in the Cypress Swamp” near New Orleans “had been committing depredations.” The next year, in July, was reported<sup>44</sup> the killing of an outlaw slave leader, Squire, near New Orleans, whose band, it was felt, was responsible for the deaths of several white men. Squire’s career had lasted for three years. A guard of

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in *The Liberator* (Boston), January 8, 1831.

<sup>41</sup> N. Y. *Sentinel*, quoted in *Liberator*, March 19, 1831.

<sup>42</sup> Richmond *Enquirer*, August 30, 1831.

<sup>43</sup> *Louisiana Advertiser*, June 8, 1836, quoted by *Liberator*, July 2, 1836.

<sup>44</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, July 19, 1837.

soldiers was sent to the swamp for his body, which was exhibited for several days in the public square of the city.

The year 1837 also saw the start of the Florida or Seminole War which was destined to drag on until 1843. This war, "conducted largely as a slave catching enterprise for the benefit of the citizens of Georgia and Florida," was, before its termination, to take an unknown number of Indian and Negro lives together with the lives of fifteen hundred white soldiers and the expenditure of twenty million dollars.<sup>45</sup> The Indians had, at the beginning of hostilities, about 1,650 warriors and 250 Negro fighters. The latter were "the most formidable foe, more blood-thirsty, active, and revengeful, than the Indian."<sup>46</sup>

Armed runaways repulsed an attack near Wilmington, North Carolina, in January, 1841, after killing one of the whites. A posse captured three of the Negroes and lodged them in the city jail. One escaped, but two were taken from the prison by some twenty-five whites and lynched.<sup>47</sup> Late in September two companies of militia were despatched in search of a body of maroons some 45 miles north of Mobile, Alabama.<sup>48</sup> "It is believed that these fellows have for a long time been in the practice of theft and arson, both in town and country. . . A force from above was scouring down, with bloodhounds, &c to meet the Mobile party." A month later frequent attacks upon white men by runaway Negroes were reported<sup>49</sup> from Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana.

Several armed planters near Hanesville, Mississippi,

<sup>45</sup> Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal*, Norman, 1932, pp. 366, 383; see also *The Liberator*, March 18, 1837.

<sup>46</sup> John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War*, N. Y., 1848, p. 309; J. R. Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida*, Columbus, 1858, pp. 121, 139.

<sup>47</sup> *Wilmington Chronicle* January 6, 1841, in *Liberator*, January 22, 1841.

<sup>48</sup> *New Orleans Bee*, October 4, 1841.

<sup>49</sup> Lafourche (La.) *Patriot in Liberator*, November 12, 1841.

in February, 1844, set an ambush for maroons who had been exceedingly troublesome. Six Negroes, "part of the gang," were trapped, but three escaped. Two were wounded, and one was killed.<sup>50</sup> In November, 1846, about a dozen armed slaveholders surprised "a considerable gang of runaway negroes" in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana. The maroons refused to surrender and fled. Two Negroes, a man and a woman, were killed, and two Negro women were "badly wounded." The others escaped.<sup>51</sup>

Joshua R. Giddings referred<sup>52</sup> to the flight in September, 1850, of some three hundred former Florida maroons from their abode in present Oklahoma to Mexico. This was accomplished after driving off Creek Indians sent to oppose their exodus. The *Pennsylvania Freeman* of October 30, 1851, citing the *Houston Telegraph* (n.d.), states that fifteen hundred former American slaves were aiding the Comanche Indians of Mexico in their fighting. Five hundred of these Negroes were from Texas. Giddings also referred to unsuccessful expeditions by slaveholders of Texas in 1853 into Mexico to recover fugitive Negroes, and declared that at the time he was writing (1858), maroons in southern Florida were again causing trouble. F. L. Olmsted gave<sup>53</sup> evidence of maroon troubles in the 1850's in Virginia, Louisiana, and northern Alabama.

A letter of August 25, 1856, to Governor Thomas Bragg of North Carolina, signed by Richard A. Lewis and twenty-one other citizens, informed<sup>54</sup> him of a "very secure retreat for runaway negroes" in a large swamp between Bladen and Robeson counties. There "for many years past, and at this time, there are several runaways of bad and daring character—destructive to all kinds of Stock

<sup>50</sup> Hanesville *Free Press*, March 1, 1844, cited by *Liberator*, April 5, 1844.

<sup>51</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, quoted in *Liberator*, December 4, 1846.

<sup>52</sup> Giddings, *op. cit.*, pp. 316, 334, 337.

<sup>53</sup> Olmsted, *Seaboard, op. cit.*, p. 177; *Back Country, op. cit.*, pp. 30, 55.

<sup>54</sup> Governor's *Letter Book*, No. 43, pp. 514-515, Historical Commission, Raleigh.

and dangerous to all persons living by or near said swamp." Slaveholders attacked these Negroes August 1, 1856, but accomplished nothing and saw one of their own number killed. "The negroes ran off cursing and swearing and telling them to come on, they were ready for them again." The *Wilmington Journal* of August 14 mentioned that these runaways "had cleared a place for a garden, had cows, &c in the swamp." Mr. Lewis and his friends were "unable to offer sufficient inducement for negro hunters to come with their dogs unless aided from other sources." The Governor suggested that magistrates be requested to call for the militia, but whether this was done or not is unknown.

A runaway camp was destroyed,<sup>55</sup> and four Negroes, including a woman, captured near Bovina, Mississippi, in March, 1857. A similar event, resulting in the wounding of three maroons occurred in October, 1859, in Nash county, North Carolina.<sup>56</sup> An "organized camp of white men and negroes" was held responsible for a servile conspiracy, involving whites, which was uncovered<sup>57</sup> in Talladega county, Alabama, in August, 1860.

The years of the Civil War witnessed a considerable accentuation in the struggle of the Negro people against enslavement. This was as true of maroon activity as it was generally. There were reports<sup>58</sup> of depredations committed by "a gang of runaway slaves" acting together with two whites along the Comite river, Louisiana, early in 1861. An expedition was set "on foot to capture the whole party." A runaway community near Marion, South Carolina, was attacked<sup>59</sup> in June, 1861. There were no

<sup>55</sup> Vicksburg *Whig*, cited by *Liberator*, April 3, 1857.

<sup>56</sup> *The Day Book*, Norfolk, October 13, 1859.

<sup>57</sup> Laura White, in *Journal of Southern History*, I (1935), p. 47.

<sup>58</sup> N. Y. *Daily Tribune*, March 11, 1861.

<sup>59</sup> H. M. Henry, *Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina*, Emory, 1914, p. 121.

casualties, however, the slave hunters capturing but two Negro children, twelve guns and one axe.

Confederate Brigadier-General R. F. Floyd asked<sup>60</sup> Governor Milton of Florida on April 11, 1862, to declare martial law in Nassau, Duvar, Clay, Putnam, St. John's, and Volusia counties "as a measure of absolute necessity, as they contain a nest of traitors and lawless negroes." In October, 1862, a scouting party of three armed whites, investigating a maroon camp containing one hundred men, women, and children in Surry county, Virginia, were killed<sup>61</sup> by these fugitives. Governor Shorter of Alabama commissioned<sup>62</sup> J. H. Clayton in January, 1863, to destroy the nests in the southeastern part of the state of "deserters, traitors, and runaway Negroes."

Colonel Hatch of the Union army reported<sup>63</sup> in August, 1864, that "500 Union men, deserters, and negroes were . . . raiding towards Gainesville," Florida. The same month a Confederate officer, John K. Jackson, declared that<sup>64</sup>

Many deserters . . . are collected in the swamps and fastnesses of Taylor, La Fayette, Levy and other counties, [in Florida] and have organized, with runaway negroes, bands for the purpose of committing depredations upon the plantations and crops of loyal citizens and running off their slaves. These depredatory bands have even threatened the cities of Tallahassee, Madison, and Marianna.

A Confederate newspaper noticed<sup>65</sup> similar activities in North Carolina in 1864. It reported it

difficult to find words of description . . . of the wild and terrible consequences of the negro raids in this obscure . . . theatre of the war. . . In the two counties of Currituck and

<sup>60</sup> *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Ser. I, Vol. LIII, p. 233.

<sup>61</sup> *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, XI, pp. 233-36.

<sup>62</sup> *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Ser. I, Vol. XV, p. 947; Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*, Chapel Hill, 1934, p. 63.

<sup>63</sup> Tatum, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>64</sup> *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Ser. I, Vol. XXV, Part II, p. 607.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Richmond Examiner*, January 14, 1864.

Camden, there are said to be from five to six hundred negroes, who are not in the regular military organization of the Yankees, but who, outlawed and disowned by their masters, lead the lives of banditti, roving the country with fire and committing all sorts of horrible crimes upon the inhabitants.

This present theatre of guerrilla warfare has, at this time, a most important interest for our authorities. It is described as a rich country, . . . and one of the most important sources of meat supplies that is now accessible to our armies. . . .

The account ends with a broad hint that white deserters from the Confederate army were fighting shoulder to shoulder with the self-emancipated Negroes.

The story of the American maroons is of interest not only because it forms a fairly important part of the history of the South and of the Negro, but also because of the evidence it affords to show that the conventional picture of slavery as a more or less delightful, patriarchal system is fallacious. The corollary of this fallacious picture—docile, contented slaves—is also, of course, seriously questioned. Indeed, taking this material on maroons in conjunction with that recently presented on servile revolts,<sup>66</sup> leads one to assert that American slavery was a horrid form of tyrannical rule which often found it necessary to suppress ruthlessly the desperate expressions of discontent on the part of its outraged victims.

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<sup>66</sup> Harvey Wish, *Journal of Negro History* (1937) XXII, pp. 302-320; present writer, *Science and Society* (1937), I, pp. 512-538; II (1938), pp. 386-391.